

Education has its roots in 'e' and 'ducere', which together mean: 'to draw out'. School derives from 'skhole', or leisure. But what is this human potential to be leisurely drawn out?

Marjorie Sykes points out that wise planning in education depends upon a clear understanding of the nature and goal of the human individual; and of the nature and values of the society of which the individual is a part.

The unexamined life is not worth living, said Socrates. The great gurus of ancient India stimulated independent inquiry. Gautama the Buddha warned his disciples against accepting "truths" on any external authority, even his own.

Our revolution must thus begin with the encouragement of independent inquiry, with what Tagore called "the education of the mind in self-reliance". Open-mindedness and understanding are closely linked, for open-mindedness means the encouragement of independent reflection.

"Building from below" by means of a plurality of centres of local responsibility, ... was the central theme of the socio-political philosophy of Gandhi, and is the basis of sarvodaya. Vinoba Bhave laid special stress on the need for education to be free from state control.

The purpose of the essays in the book *Education in Search of a Philosophy* is not to supply answers, but to indicate the nature of the questions involved.

Marjorie Sykes, the great educationist, came to India, while still young. She worked with Gandhi, and was deeply influenced by the thoughts of Tagore, Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave on education.

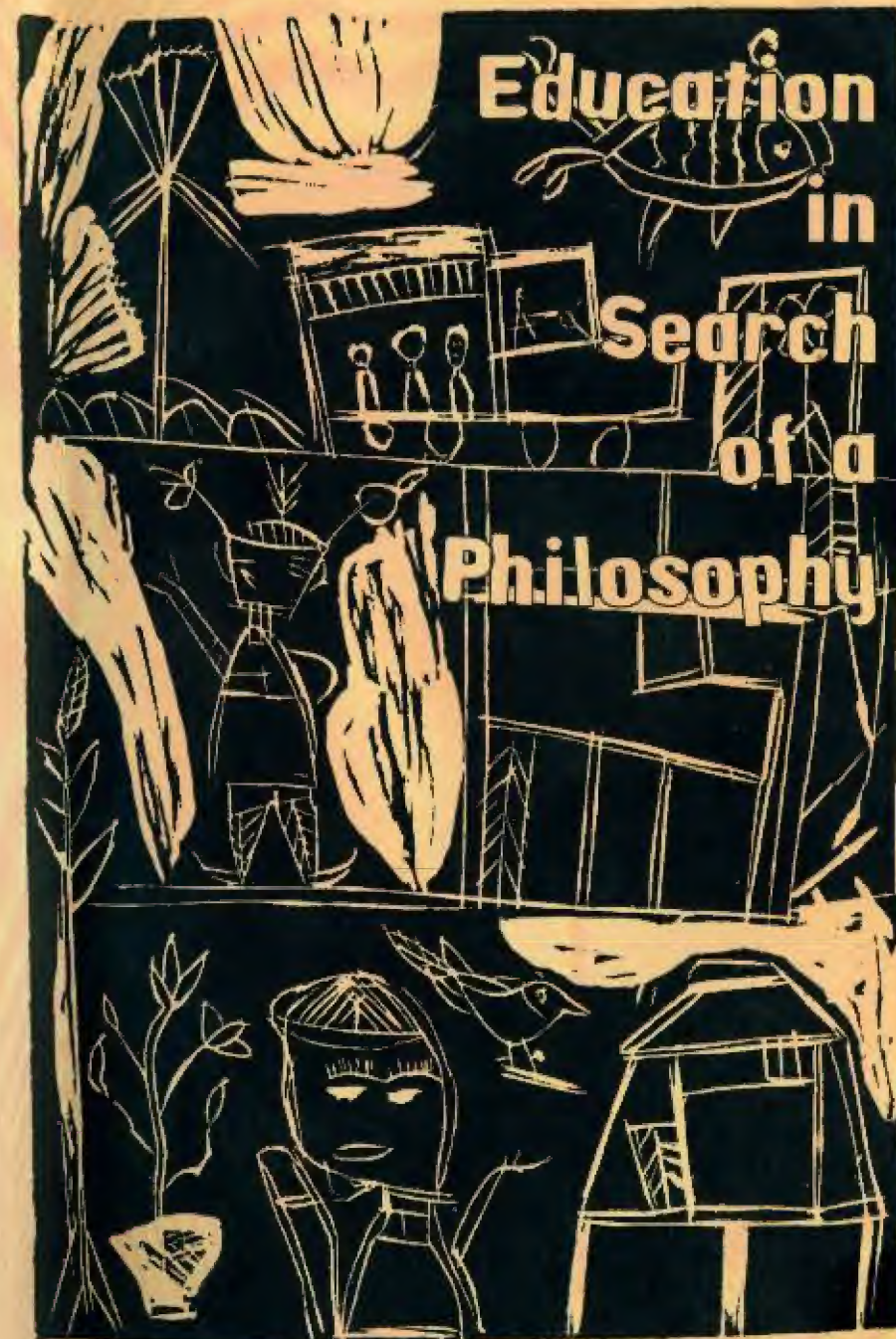


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Preface

The three essays which make up this book are the substance of three lectures delivered in Bombay on October 3, 4, and 5, 1975. Owing to limitations of time, the lectures themselves were somewhat shorter than the printed form which has been based upon my lecture notes.

The word "philosophy" may sound remote and academic. But its meaning is practical; a love of wisdom. The theme of the lectures may be stated very simply; we seek wisdom in planning for the education of our people.

Wise planning in education depends upon a clear understanding of two things; the nature of the human individual and the goal of his development; the nature and values of the society of which he is a part. About both these things there are alternative views, and the view we accept will shape the education we give. I have argued for the view that seems to me valid. This choice in the last analysis is an act of faith; I believe however that both the culture of India and the values of our national society reflect the same faith.

I hope I have made it clear that the acceptance of this view of reality has far-reaching practical

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consequences both for our broad educational planning and for our daily school and classroom practice. Further detail would be beyond the scope of this book.

About the position itself there is nothing original; my debt to the great teachers and thinkers of mankind in our own and other countries is obvious and absolute. I do however wish to record my gratitude to the Gandhi Shikshan Bhavan authorities for giving me the opportunity to speak about convictions which have grown upon me during nearly fifty happy years of teaching in India, and for the inspiration I have derived from the Bhavan's own faithfulness and courage in striving to embody the values of which I have spoken.

December 1975

Marjorie Sykes



Education and Philosophy: Some General Considerations

When I was asked to give a title to this series of talks, I suggested "Education in search of a Philosophy" with a good deal of diffidence, and I was a little surprised that it was so readily accepted. Twenty years ago I might have chosen, for the same material, a very different title. The essential questions before teachers were the same then as they are now, but in those days I might well have been told that such questions, questions of human values, have no philosophical meaning. It was held that the concepts of quality and value—truth and falsehood, beauty and ugliness, good and evil, and so on—are merely the expression of subjective preference, and have no more universal validity than a liking for jazz, or an allergy against cats.

The prevalence of this attitude did not, of course, stifle serious discussion of matters of public interest. It is interesting, nevertheless, that even a man so distinguished as Bertrand Russell felt himself obliged to declare that he took part in debate on ethical, social and political issues, such as education, "not as a philosophical thinker but as an ordinary concerned citizen". The study of ethical and political principle was

not at that time considered to fall within the province of philosophy as a serious academic discipline.

Times have changed. There is a revival of recognition, in philosophical thinking today, of the importance of what has generally been regarded as the central subject-matter of philosophical concern. "Philosophy", says Professor Singer of New York, "tackles the problems which are left over, after we have answered those which can be solved by the discovery of new *facts*. Philosophical problems are those which, while not amenable to facts, may be amenable to reason... We may therefore safely ignore Aristotle when he writes on zoology, but not when he writes on ethics or moral philosophy. Our knowledge of facts has expanded since his day, but not our reasoning powers".¹

It is interesting that when Professor Singer enumerates some of the problems which are "left over" as not amenable to solution by new facts, his list corresponds almost exactly to the topics which were being discussed by Socrates in Athens twenty-five centuries ago:

His conversation was of human things: what is godly, what is ungodly; what is beautiful, what is ugly; what is just, what is a unjust; what is courage, what is cowardice; what is a state, what is a statesman; what is a government, what is a governor; these and others like them.²

These problems of value and conduct were just as much alive in ancient India as in ancient Greece; they are as much alive for us as for our ancestors, and as

relevant to our thinking about education. It is true for everyone of us teachers that "no conclusions about what we ought to do can validly be drawn from a description of what most people around us *think* we ought to do". We can reach valid conclusions with regard to our duty and obligations as teachers only by valid reasoning about the problems of value and conduct which are the subject-matter of philosophy.

The intimacy of the relationship between the questions dealt with by philosophy and those raised by education is vividly illustrated by a couple of sentences from the writings of two men whose influence on teachers in India and throughout the world has been profound, John Dewey and T. P. Nunn. Dewey wrote: "Philosophy is the theory of education in its most general form". Nunn defined education as "a practical philosophy touching life at every point". Both would have agreed with their predecessor, the German philosopher Fichte, who said that "the art of education will never attain complete clearness in itself without philosophy". Of course not, for if we define "the art of education" in the most general terms as skill in promoting the growth and development of human beings, we cannot avoid reflecting on the nature of human beings and the goal of human life.

The sceptic might well ask, will the art of education ever attain complete clearness anyway? Anyone who reads its history, from the earliest times of which we have any record up to our own day, can hardly fail to be struck by the recurrence of the same problems and the same solutions, the same criticisms and the same reforms, as teachers of genius, in one century

after another, have brought their insights to bear upon the school practices of their own day. The history of education, in fact, is rich in illustrations of Vinoba Bhave's aphorism: "People never learn from history, that is why history repeats itself".

Take for example the topic which is so common in our own society, the lamentation over the degeneracy of "the modern young". Who has not heard *ad nauseam* of their lack of discipline and morals? It may be some consolation, or at least may help to see things in perspective, if we realise that these lamentations by the older generation over the failings of the young have been going on at least since the days of ancient Greece, and probably much longer. Back in the time of Socrates, the dramatist Aristophanes was entertaining Athens with witty topical comedies. One of the themes about which he joked was the tendency to idealise the conduct of the youth of "the good days". Here are some lines from one of his songs:

To hear then prepare
Of the discipline rare
 that flourished in Athens of yore,
When Honour and Truth
Were in fashion with youth
 and Sobriety bloomed on our shore!
Come listen now to the good old days
 when the children, strange to tell,
Were seen, not heard, led a simple life—
 in short, were brought up well³.

We can enjoy Aristophanes' fun today just as much as the Greeks for whom he wrote it; perhaps some day *our* children will be telling *their* grandchildren of the "good old days" of the 1970's, and lamenting over the undisciplined youth of the twenty first century, so different from their own sober selves! Human nature repeats itself and so does history.

If we now turn to some of the more serious themes in the history of education, we shall find the same recurrence. A lot of us criticise the dead bookishness and mindless rote learning of our schools. We are right, but we are not saying anything *new*. Four hundred years ago in Poland, the great teacher Comenius was complaining that "schools are the terror of boys and the slaughter-houses of minds, places *where minds are fed on words*". At about the same time, in England, another great Teacher, Roger Ascham, was criticising the tendency to praise children who rapidly became "word-perfect". Such superficial quickness, he said, is not the same as real intelligence. An intelligent boy *thinks* about what he reads; it is good that he should sometimes disagree with what he finds in the book. These warnings went unheeded. Two centuries later, early western education in India was marked by the same dead verbalism. In 1818, a Mr. Rottler described what he had found in Madras in words very like those used by Comenius. "The poor children", he said, "are learning words without thoughts". Many of them are doing so still. In our own century, Tagore has ridiculed the schools of Calcutta as he knew them in his skit *The Parrot's Training*. The parrot,

unlucky bird, is deprived of its natural freedom and compelled to sit with clipped wings in a cage (a *golden* cage, to be sure, in the gilding of which the State had spared no expense!) It is fed on "copies of copies of copies of text-books". When finally, all its native spontaneous vitality drained away, the bird lies dead, and only the paper stuffing rustles when it is poked, the pandits are satisfied that its education is complete. "Minds are fed on words."

Recurrent criticisms of schools as they have been matched, in the practice of great teachers down the centuries, with recurrent efforts to realise their vision of schools as they ought to be. Two thousand years ago, in ancient Rome, lived a noble teacher called Quintilian. He insisted on the reality and value of what we are accustomed to call "individual difference". The variety of human nature, he declared, is "incredible", and it is cruel and stupid to try to force this variety into any one prescribed mould. He put his point with a vigour and sincerity equal to that of any progressive teacher today, but very few listened to him or put his principles, into practice. In the time of Elizabeth I of England, the great teacher Richard Mulcaster pointed once more to human variety, and drew the common-sense conclusion: he refused to countenance any regimentation, or to fix any "age-norms" for beginning or completing education; he pointed out that when individuals so clearly develop at varying speeds and in different ways, it is essential for their well-being that classes should be small enough for individual care, and that the youngest children should have the best teachers.

Small classes; individual care; the highest honour for the teachers of the smallest children—how far we are still, in India, from putting these ideas into practice, even though Mahatma Gandhi himself strongly endorsed the principle of flexibility. Some one once asked him to 'prescribe' a uniform period for training in his ashram. In reply, he pointed to the stubborn fact of human variability. "How can I fix a limit?" he asked, "Some people grasp the essence of the thing in a couple of weeks; others would never do so if I were to keep them twenty-five years!"

Quintilian also rejected and condemned corporal punishment, in words as forceful as any used by his successors: "Whipping is unseemly, and when the boys are somewhat grown up, it is an affront in the highest degree". He pointed out the stupidity of punishing children because they could not, with their varied natural endowments, all learn the same rigidly prescribed materials at the same speed. The great teachers who followed him said the same. Yet "the system" went on ignoring these common-sense comments; almost every picture that has been preserved of the schools of the past shows the tools of corporal punishment prominently displayed, and often shows the actual "unseemly" act of whipping.

Quintilian, like other great teachers, observed children with an insight inspired by love. He understood how little children grow and develop as persons by their absorption in natural interests in which "work" and "play" are one enjoyable experience. "This is a thing", he commented, "not to be compelled". He encouraged

children to learn by the natural exercise of their senses. There, in ancient Rome, was the seed-thought of the nursery school which we usually consider so modern. Quintilian and his successors were in fact in essential agreement with what Tagore said so well at the beginning of this century:

Growth is the movement of a whole towards a fuller wholeness. Living things possess this wholeness from the beginning... a child has its own perfection as a child.

Yet these things have to be said over and over again. A modern teacher in England, Harold Loukes, has found it necessary to repeat the same principle in an article published this year:

Childhood is *not* merely the waiting-room for manhood. Children have a life of their own, with its own values and its own rewards; and those grow most successfully into ripe men and women who savour their childish life to the full while they have it. They grow by being themselves.

The same protests, the same reminders, the same reforms, are still needed as much as ever in India today. Anyone who really knows children knows how true it is that human beings are "born curious".⁴ Every mother knows that no sooner can her baby crawl than it sets off with eager determination to explore the immediate neighbourhood. As its powers of muscular

co-ordination increase it uses its hands and its mouth for a continuous process of discovery and analysis. The baby isn't hungry, it isn't wanting food; it is engaged in a search for understanding. A little later it will use its growing mastery of speech to continue the same search, with its seemingly unending stream of what's and way's. This native curiosity, this spirit of inquiry, is part and parcel of those natural interests by which, as Quintilian saw, the child grows.

But how little we have learned from the great teachers! How many Indian schools operate to crush curiosity and destroy the spirit of inquiry! Instead of providing the young intelligence with an environment rich in food for thought, offering guidance and instruction to enable him to use it to the full, and protection so that he may explore in freedom and safety while he is still immature (this, as Tagore reminds us, is the real function of the brahmacharya ashram)⁵—instead of this, what do we do? We make the active little body sit still, we set the active little mind to learning "words without thoughts", often in a dreary room which offers far less "food for thought" than the most poverty-stricken village home.

This is not because the teacher is a monster. The average teacher is a decent, affectionate human being imprisoned, like the children, in a rigidly regimented "system". We pay lip-service, of course, to the variety of individual differences, but the "system" nevertheless requires a teacher in our crowded cities to cope with seventy or eighty children at once; it expects every child to follow the same mass-production line, learn

at the same speed from the same text-books the same arbitrary selection of information, and be judged, and all too often "failed", by the same stereotyped examination. Oh yes, we would agree in theory with Froebel that children should be treated as flowers growing in a garden; in practice, the "system" treats them much more as if they were empty boxes to be crammed, as quickly as possible, with the materials needed for a "pass". If we do less whipping than our ancestors did, it may be because the fear of the examination is as potent—and often as harmful—as the fear of the whip.

I need not elaborate; we all know what goes on. So long as we accept "the system", we have no right to blame the teacher who is driven to say, in effect: "Don't think cram; don't ask questions, learn these notes!" Intelligent teachers, who understand and deplore the situation, have told me how they themselves have felt obliged to say the same. Conformity, not curiosity, is the key to examination success. And in this matter our universities are often little better. One hears from many sources that if a student is so independent-minded as to work out a thesis on a controversial subject, and so rash as to advance a reasoned opinion which differs from that of the examining professor, he runs the risk of his paper being down-graded.

Yet in spite of all these adverse conditions, there are many young people today in whom intellectual curiosity and independence are alive and vigorous. They were born curious and they remain curious. They reject the ideals of conformity and material success.

They are looking for something better, something more alive; especially they are looking for something more alive in education. It is because I believe that there are many of these potential rebels, these creative non-conformists among the young teachers in our schools and the students in our universities and teachers' colleges, that I am putting my thoughts before you today. ✓

I would like to draw your attention to some words of the great Greek philosopher Plato, who did *not* share the opinion that education is not a subject for philosophical reflection: "Education", he says, "is liable to take a wrong direction"—we have seen how true that is. "But", he goes on, "it is capable of reformation, and the work of reformation is the great business of every man while he lives". That means it is *our* business. How can we, Indian teachers in India, help to change things for the better?

Some of the most original educational enterprises of our time have been carried on by Rabindranath Tagore on the one hand, and by Mahatma Gandhi and his fellow-worker Vinoba Bhave on the other. This is not the place to discuss the full implications of their thought and achievement; I shall refer to some aspects of these in later lectures. Here I want to remind you of their insistence that education must deal not in words but in realities, enabling children to understand and appreciate the world of nature and of humanity, and participate as responsible adults in its life.

Vinoba refers frequently to the old *shloka* which says that when a son reaches the age of sixteen he should

be treated as a friend and equal—implying that a young man should by that time be ready to take adult responsibility for his own life. We may compare with this Tagore's words, written in 1919: "Let us never forget that whether for economic prosperity or for development of character, education of the mind in self-reliance is the most important of all educations". We may also consider along with these the words of Alfred North Whitehead, the British philosopher: "The most valuable intellectual development is self-development, and this mostly takes place between the ages of sixteen and thirty".⁶

Does this not suggest that by about the age of sixteen, a young human being should be equipped with the skills which will enable him to take responsibility for his own adult life? It is interesting that a number of educational thinkers in our own day have put forward ideas on these lines, as a constructive alternative to the institutional rigidity of our prevailing pattern of "higher education". "De-schooling", "free" universities, "open" universities and so on are all manifestations of a search for something better. And like so many of the ideas discussed in this talk, they are not in essence new. In Plato's Greece, in Comenius' Poland, in Akbar's India, in Mulcaster's England, we discern a kind of consensus that children should be equipped with certain basis skills and tools for self-development, which then in later years may be used as the individual chooses. There is also a basic consensus about what these skills and tools should be, though some of the lists are more elaborate than others.

They include the skills of the body, the development of its strength and agility, balance and grace; skills in language and letters and numbers, skills in manipulation and the use of tools. And every list, without exception, includes music and gives it an honourable place. "The life of man in every part", wrote Plato, "has need of harmony and rhythm". "Song", says Eskimo wisdom, "is the breath of the spirit that consecrates the act of life". Singing was an important part of fundamental education for Comenius and Akbar and Mulcaster. We all know how central a place was given to music in the Brahmacharya Ashram at Santiniketan. Music, for Tagore, in a symbol of the indivisible wholeness of the process of human growth:

Our life in the world is like listening to a song. We do not have to wait till it is finished to enjoy it. The song is there in the singing from the very first note, its unity permeates all its parts. Only, our joy grows in depth with our deeper comprehension of its unity.

It seems to me that this kind of thinking offers guidelines by which our whole approach to education might be simplified, and made both more flexible and more realistic. Our aim would be first, that boys and girls approaching the threshold of manhood and womanhood should do so in the fullness of physical vigour and well-being, second, that they should have learned to relate to people, within the family, within the peer-group, within the society of their village or

local community; third, that they should have dexterity and confidence in a wide range of practical skills of daily usefulness.

When such guide-lines are worked out in detail, we may find that they call for a good deal of the "knowledge-content" of traditional formal education. But within our framework, this would be absorbed as a natural, meaningful part of an expanding pattern of experience; it would not be, as it so often is now, a meaningless load of unrelated information. This pattern of experience would be steadily enriched as the child passes naturally from one level of interest and activity to the next. In this whole process, experiences of home and school and work will all play their part, in a varying relationship to one another.

If we approach education in this way, as the art of stimulating and protecting natural human growth, we shall concentrate our main attention on providing growing children with the kind of environment which is conducive to growth—physical, intellectual social, aesthetic, emotional growth. Not a "prescribed text" for all alike, but a library full of varied and accessible books, pictures and maps; not a bell-bound series of "periods" for this or that snippet of information or practice, but freedom to persevere and achieve results, in workshops and gardens and playgrounds; not teachers who are harassed by the impossible task of keeping a heterogeneous crowd of children attentive to the same rigid syllabus, but teachers who are free to take interest and offer guidance as needed in what every individual is doing. The aim would be to create

an atmosphere of ordered freedom and friendliness in which happy social experiences in music and dance and drama, in the preparation and serving of common meals, in responsibility for maintaining the school in cleanliness and beauty, would all find their place.

This is a far cry from our present craze for regulation and for uniformity (which, in face of all the evidence, we vainly believe will promote unity), and our barren discussions of "10+2+2"; but it is, essentially, the path of all the great teachers. In this connection I would like to draw your attention to a little-known genius, the Italian Vittorino, whose work in many ways illustrates what I have been saying. Vittorino was born six centuries ago, in 1378. Italy in his day was a network of small city-states, and Vittorino was asked by the ruler of one of them, Mantua, to set up a school there.

The school he established had a number of features which remind the Indian student of Santiniketan five hundred years later. It was called *La Giocosa*, the "pleasant place" or "place of joy". Children and teachers lived together in a house of simple but beautiful proportions, amidst lovely natural surroundings. There was plenty of fun and exercise, with swimming and games in the open air. As at Santiniketan, there was plain, healthy, simple living for all, teachers and pupils alike. The aim was the growth of self-discipline and social responsibility through self-government. Individual differences of ability and interest were recognized and studied: all-round personal growth was valued more than exclusively intellectual achievement. Vittorino held standards of personal integrity and human worth beside

which material riches or poverty did not count. He admitted rich and poor on equal terms, and so completely did he spend himself in the service of his school that when he died in 1446 it was found that his personal possessions were not sufficient even to pay for the funeral rites.

Quintilian, Vittorino, Comenius, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Tagore, and those many humble, unknown men and women everywhere who in their time have awakened and nurtured the spirits of children, were geniuses in the true art of teaching; they were not, in the formal sense, philosophers. But the education they gave expressed, as Nunn said, "a practical philosophy touching life at every point". Insights inspired by love and tested in experience led to an evaluation of human nature as something alive, growing, *dynamic*: something which holds a potential force for *good*, which may be and should be enabled to grow in freedom. The school systems of their times, and the conditions against which they fought, were the product of very different assumptions about human nature; it was treated as *static*, as something which offered the teacher passive materials to be shaped or passive receptacles to be filled; when the life-force rebelled against this passivity it was regarded as essentially *depraved*, as something which was in constant need of restraint and correction.

The dynamic, life-affirming philosophy of the great teachers was expressed more in action than in word—in the way they lived and taught and moved among their children. Pestalozzi and Froebel, however, did try to put it into words, and both speak in terms of a

natural growth and unfolding of the true nature of man. "The pure and beneficent powers of humanity", says Pestalozzi, "are neither the products of art nor the results of chance". They are a natural possession of every man, and their development is a universal human need. The seed is there, dormant, ready to grow. Similarly Froebel: "It is not the educator who puts new powers into man.....he only takes care that no untoward influence should disturb nature's march of development. Human nature, like the spirit of God, is ever unfolding its inner essence".⁷

The qualities which express this inner essence have been regarded all through history as a trinity: Truth, Beauty, Goodness; Knowledge, Love, Service; or in the words of the British philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, "activity of thought, receptiveness to beauty, humane feeling". Human thought has never regarded this trinity of ideals as separate and unrelated goals; it sees them as elements in a harmony. From Plato to Tagore the aspiration to harmony, to wholeness, is there: "perfect freedom lies in perfect harmony". Wholeness of living unites Truth, Beauty and Goodness in one majestic symphony.

I recently found an interesting illustration of this in an article by the American dramatic critic Oscar Mendel. He was commenting on the contemporary phenomenon of the "theatre of brutality", with its thesis that "evil and stupidity are all there is". Mendel does not criticise these dramas on moral grounds; he rejects them because they fail to satisfy on aesthetic grounds, as works of art. He contends that "the combination of *intelligence* with persuasive *ethical affirmation* (italics mine) in a work

of art heightens our sense of *aesthetic* delight”.

This argument, that Truth and Goodness are themselves an integral part of Beauty, stems from our universal search for a harmony of experience. It is in the same category as our common feeling that Beauty is an element in the highest Truth and Goodness. We understand what a student means when he talks about the “beauty” of a mathematical demonstration; “the beauty of holiness” is a phrase which makes sense to us. We also respect and admire most deeply that man in whom goodness and humane feeling are united with the highest standards of intellectual integrity.

This striving for a unified ideal reflects our needs for integrity in our universe of discourse. In education too, we seek a consistent interpretation of the meaning of our experience in its entirety, and this is at the root of the search for a “philosophy” of education. The vision of a wholeness which embraces both the most rigorous thought and the most profound and sensitive awareness has been expressed in a strikingly beautiful way in Albert Einstein’s famous words:

To know that what is impenetrable to me really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty—this cosmic religious experience is at the centre of all true religion; it is the source of all true science.

What all this means for a philosophy of education is something we must try to work out in the following lectures.

The Riddle of the Sphinx



“What animal is it that goes upon four legs in the morning, upon two legs at noon, and upon three legs in the evening?” You all know the answer to that ancient riddle. Do you know that it is called “the riddle of the Sphinx”, and do you know the story? The Sphinx was a monster, half woman and half lion, who crouched on top of a great rock outside the city of Thebes. She confronted all who passed with her riddle, and when they could not answer correctly she killed them. At last came the hero Oedipus and faced her boldly. “The answer is Man”, he said. The Sphinx in fury threw herself from the rock and perished, and Thebes was saved.

The famous social philosopher Erich Fromm makes an interesting comment on this story in his book *The Forgotten Language*.

The important element in the riddle of the Sphinx is not the *riddle* (which any clever twelve-year-old might guess) but the *answer*, Man. The Sphinx is saying: He can save mankind who knows that the most important answer man can give to the most difficult question with which he

is confronted is *man himself*. . . So Oedipus becomes the saviour of Thebes.

My thesis in the first lecture was that the history of education, as we briefly surveyed it, could be interpreted as the battle-ground of conflicting ideas about the nature of childhood and the process of becoming an adult. Is a child an empty vessel to be filled? a crooked, unserviceable tool to be beaten into conformity with pattern?—or a sapling to be tended and protected while it grows by its own innate vitality into a straight and sturdy tree? If the second alternative is true, as all the great teachers have taught, the most urgent need in education is to study the tree, to know what it is that we are aiming at. As T. S. Eliot said, "To know what we want in education we must know that we want in general", and to know what we want in general we must have some answer to that old question, What is Man? An Asian Seminar on education very truly said this year that "there can be no education without reflection on reality".⁸ And at the centre of reality, for us, is the truth about our own human nature.

Very well then, what *is* man? A material body in a material universe, built of the same chemical elements, subject to the same physical laws, as the earth which cradles him: a living creature among innumerable other living creatures, born from other life, feeding on other life, bearing living seed, finally becoming in its turn the food of succeeding life; a creature endowed with intelligence, as are some other creatures, but with an intelligence so far outreaching theirs that by it he has

"dominion over the beasts of the field", and dominion also over his material environment. "What a piece of work is man!" said Shakespeare, and long before Shakespeare a Greek poet had said the same:

Wonders there are many—none more
wonderful than man.
His the might that crosses seas swept white by
storm winds . . .
He the master of the beast lurking in the
wild hills . . .
His is speech and wind-swift thought.⁹

These conditions of our bodily life have shaped the growth of human society. Man as a social being is co-eval with man as man; the primary determinants of human society are the fact of man's bi-sexual reproduction and the fact of his long and vulnerable immaturity. Within the social matrix the young of mankind learn the skills of human living, partly like other young animals through social play, partly through a gradually increasing participation in the necessary business of life—hunting, farming, weaving, making vessels and tools and houses. The "speech and wind-swift thought" celebrated in the Greek poem have been vitally important factors in the success of these social achievements.

The business of securing a livelihood has occupied a vast amount of the time and energy of the human race. Learning how to do it has occupied an equally large amount of the time and energy of the young.

But—and here we come at once to a question of perennial interest—is this training in how to make a living to be considered as *education*?

Plato, in Book I of *The Laws*, gave his own answer to this question very clearly:

Let us not leave the meaning of education ambiguous. What we call an uneducated man may be very well prepared to be a retail trader or the captain of a ship, and the like . . .

The sort of training, which aims at the acquisition of wealth or bodily strength or mere cleverness, *apart from intelligence and justice*, is not worthy to be called education at all. The education in virtue, in our view, is the only education that deserves the name.

Plato's attitude is based upon the conviction that man is *not* merely the "animal with an intellect" which we have been describing. His nature includes something more, and if we turn from Plato to the Indian philosophical tradition, we find an analysis of what this "something more" is. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* defines the material, biological and mental elements which make up man the clever animal as "food, life, mind", but it does not stop there. It states that the reality of the Self also includes *vignanam*, understanding; it *also* includes *anand*, joy.

It was the experience of *vignanam* that inspired the famous paean to Knowledge which is attributed to

Muhammad the Prophet. The Knowledge he speaks of is not "mere cleverness"; it is *understanding*, akin to joy, akin to goodness, akin to worship:

Acquire knowledge, for he who seeks it adores God, he who dispenses it bestows aims. Knowledge is our friend in the desert, our society in solitude; it guides us to happiness, it sustains us in misery, and with knowledge does the servant of God rise to the heights of goodness. Therefore seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave . . . Get knowledge, though it be in China¹⁰.

Man then is a creature who seeks knowledge, or understanding, for its own sake, not for any utilitarian end which the knowledge may serve. He is also a creature who enjoys people and things ("sunrise and sunset and the silent glory of stars", as Tagore phrased it), not because they are "useful" to him, but simply because they *are*, and are beautiful in his eyes. True joy goes very deep. Man, alone among the animals, knows his own mortality; yet he is capable of choosing death with open eyes ("for the *joy* that is set before him", as was said with such insight of Jesus) rather than violate his own evaluation of what is worthy of his humanity.

Man is aware too of the continuing conflict between the urge of his biological nature for self-preservation, the urge of his practical intelligence for power, and this distinctively human conviction that "being" is more significant than biological existence, and that, in

Aristotle's words, "there is a life which is higher than the measure of humanity; men will live it by virtue of something in them that is divine".

It matters little whether we call this capacity for self-transcendence a manifestation of divinity or of essential humanity. What matters a great deal is that it is this power of self-transcendence which is the real basis of the principle that men as men are worthy of freedom and of respect. It is therefore of vital importance in the search for a practical philosophy of education. Plato's insistence that is no real education which ignores "virtue, intelligence, justice" is essentially an insistence that the disinterested search for understanding, and the power of working for self-transcendent goals, are what distinguish the truly human from the merely animal in man.

A people's thought is reflected in its use of words. The English word 'school' comes from the Greek word *skhole*, and *skhole* means leisure. Leisure! what a long way that seems from the joyless whipping-houses where, as we saw earlier, children have so often suffered; what a long way from the Calcutta school which Tagore referred to as the 'Andamans' of his childhood! 'School' means leisure. In the eyes of the Greeks, it was what you did for your own enjoyment and understanding when the necessary work of earning a living was over. The pursuits of a school were not, in their opinion, a means to a utilitarian end; they were an end in themselves, intrinsically desirable.

This conception of the nature of a school appears again, many centuries later, in the writings of Comenius:

Let the main object be to find a method of instruction by which teachers may teach less, but learners may learn more; by which schools may be the scene of less noise, aversion and useless labour, but of *more leisure, enjoyment and solid progress*, through which the community may have more light, order, peace and rest.¹¹

The concept of "leisure" must not be misunderstood. Leisure is *not* the same as idleness; to say that a school should cater for leisure does *not* mean that it should cater for an idle "privileged" class who do not need to work. On the contrary, leisure without work has no meaning; it is work and leisure together that make up the healthy rhythm of waking life. A good human society should be able to offer work and leisure to all, and idleness to none.

A philosophy of education must be clear about the relationship between learning to earn one's livelihood by work, and learning to use one's leisure in a fully human way—in other words, about what we now call the vocational or technical, and the liberal or cultural aspects of education. Over the greater part of history and all over the world the chief centre of training for livelihood was and still is the family, in which children grow up to practise the traditional family skills. In more complex societies there also developed a system of craft and trade guilds where apprentices learned from their masters to achieve and respect this approved standards of professional workmanship. In a social organisation

of this kind, the school could concentrate on “liberal” education because “vocational” education was already provided for. Its own task was to nourish men’s curiosity, their delight in things-in-themselves, and their speculations about the ultimate nature of our universe.

From this distinction, both in India and in the west, has arisen the idea that the apprentice should pay, in money or in labour, for the opportunity to learn the skills by which he will be able to supply his material needs, but that the knowledge of the schools, which is its own reward, should be shared freely with all who seek it. So Socrates, himself a stone-cutter, master of a skilled productive craft, gave what might be called his ‘school’ teaching in the open air. “Anyone might listen. He never exacted a fee, but gave without stint to all”.²

Our modern confusion of thought about whether schools should serve a vocational or a cultural purpose has arisen from a number of causes. One of them is basically a philosophical dilemma. We are feeling the impact of the very widespread assumption that what I have called the “self-transcending” aspect of human nature has in fact no validity. This assumption is based partly on Marxist interpretations of history, partly on “popular” conclusions from the findings of modern science. Dr. George Gamow ends his fascinating and widely-read *Biography of the Earth* with this sentence: “The story of the earth’s past and future evolution may serve to point out the *unimportance of human history* (italics mine) compared with even such a tiny bit of cosmic matter as our little Earth”. The suggestion is that

mankind is no more than a cosmic accident of no significance. The alternative view, that our non-material experience is real, is expressed succinctly in a jingle which was common in my childhood, and which answers Gamow in two lines:

You are more than the Earth, though you’re
such a dot.

You can love and think, and the Earth can not!

These alternatives reflect a typical, genuinely philosophical issue. The two points of view are not “amenable to facts”, not susceptible of rigid logical proof or disproof, but they are amenable to reasoned argument. The position was put tellingly by a philosopher, Dr. L. P. Jacks, in the Hibbert Lectures of 1923:

The facts of astronomy are so overwhelming that human speech is stricken dumb . . . Great God, what a universe!

Is all that, I ask myself, alive or dead? The moral law within, that I know is alive, more intensely alive than anything else I know of. But is life a mere accident, a trivial byproduct of the universal industries, while all the rest is stone dead? Or is it part of a larger and longer life? *Of two things, one. Either* the whole is alive together, moral law and starry firmament dancing to the same immortal melody, *or else* the life I have, moral law and all, is not worth very much.

I believe that a strong and reasonable case can be made for the first alternative, and in that case loving and thinking and a "liberal" education, make sense. If the second alternative is chosen, we might as well use our technical cleverness to make our trivial lives materially comfortable while they last; nothing really matters.

Other elements in our confusion of thought have a historical origin. In many early societies there grew up a special priestly class, with responsibilities which required a special apprenticeship. Priests had to be trained in knowledge of the scriptures and the rituals; they, and they alone, learned to read. A different specialised responsibility was assigned to the class of kings and rulers, and they too needed a special apprenticeship. Both these apprenticeships, by their very nature, deal in self-transcendent values; the priest's involves concepts of the nature of the world and the destiny of man; the ruler's involves concepts of social responsibility and justice. In simple societies the priests and lawgivers worked for their material livelihood like every one else; in more complex societies however, they became an elite, their material needs being supplied by the rest of the population in return for the real cultural services they performed.

In view of the priests' apprenticeship to the sacred written word, it is no accident that the English words 'cleric' and 'clerk' were originally one and the same. The kings, so long as they ruled personally, did not *need* to be literate. Bureaucratic government, however, introduced a new element; it has created a class of

secular clerks who make a living by their verbal skills, without necessarily contributing to society either cultural services or directly productive labour. In modern times the growth of other large-scale enterprises in commerce, industry, communications and so on, and the extension of Governmental activities to more and more areas of life, have enormously increased the demand for such clerks, and we are all familiar with the way in which modern Indian education has been geared to supply this demand. For the vast majority of our people 'school' has nothing to do with leisure, or with the disinterested pursuit of knowledge and beauty; children are sent to school to be apprenticed to an elitist 'white-collar' occupation; school is a vocational training for the material security of a place in the bureaucracy.

Our argument up to this point may be summarised in the form of brief assertions:

1. A human being is an 'intelligent animal'; he is also a creature who 'does not live by bread alone', but by understanding and by joy.
2. Therefore, education for livelihood and education for living are *both* necessary, but *both* must promote growth in understanding and in joy if they are fully to satisfy human needs.
3. The educational 'system' in India fails to provide satisfactorily either for livelihood or for living, because
 - a. it is a highly competitive process of selection for only one form of livelihood, viz. the clerical occupations.

- b. competitive pressures leave no leisure for disinterested pursuit of knowledge or skill for its own sake.

It is all too easy for an army of bureaucrats to become an army of parasites, and we in India cannot afford to be complacent about the danger. The bourgeois society of our cities is shaped by the 'government servant' and his counterparts in the managerial elite. All of them are under constant subtle pressure to conform to the accepted standards of their class, and these standards are frankly material; what matters is to secure possessions and power. Hierarchy and status have an inflated importance, and men and women fall an easy prey to the countless agents who (for their own profit) urge upon them the necessity of conspicuous consumption in order to maintain their 'image' in the eyes of the world. By Mahatma Gandhi's standards our urban elite is a society of thieves, consuming much, contributing little of real value.

This may seem too harsh a judgment, for we all know people who, like ourselves, belong to this bourgeois society but refuse to conform to its standards. Yet many clear-sighted thinkers make the same judgment. The late Dr. Arnold Toynbee recorded his belief that the immediate prospects before humanity are gloomy, and that the closing years of this century may see an increase in "man's inhumanity to man". At the same time he expressed his faith in the non-conformist young: "It is in their power to bring about the needed revolution, the revolution in the mind which alone

has any lasting meaning—a revolution into *open-mindedness, understanding, disinterested creation, and love*'.¹²

If this analysis is roughly correct, one of our first tasks must be to consider how in our practice of education, we may promote the revolution in the mind. For Toynbee's list of revolutionary qualities corresponds closely to the "understanding and joy" which are the marks of the fully human life.

It is clear that open-mindedness and understanding are closely linked, for open-mindedness means the encouragement of independent reflection. "The unexamined life is not worth living", said Socrates. The irreverent Aristophanes, in *The Clouds*, makes pungent remarks about Socrates' "thinking-school", where young men learn to disagree with their fathers about all kinds of accepted, but unexamined ideas. That kind of thing can be very uncomfortable in an authoritarian, patriarchal society—no wonder they condemned him for "corrupting the youth"!

The great *gurus* of ancient India also ran "thinking-schools"; they would certainly have agreed with the modern teacher who said that the verb "to teach" means to *provoke* thought, not to settle it. They supplied no ready-made answers, they stimulated independent inquiry. Gautama the Buddha warned his disciples against accepting "truths" on any external authority, even his own. Peter Abelard, the greatest teacher of mediaeval Europe, was even more daring: "A doctrine is not to be believed because God has said it, but because we are convinced by reason that it is so".

"Much knowledge does not teach understanding", said Heraclitus in ancient Greece. But the strongly authoritarian tradition of Indian education tends to encourage the acquisition of factual or verbal "knowledge" rather than the independent inquiry which leads to understanding. Our revolution must begin with the encouragement of independent inquiry, with what Tagore called, in a passage already quoted, "the education of the mind in self-reliance". He himself supplied a magnificent example of the self-reliance of the mind when in 1921 he refused to accept, on Gandhi's authority, the place assigned to spinning in the programme of swaraj, and insisted on thinking things out for himself:

The spinning wheel in its right place would surely do good. But where the charkha is misplaced, the thread is spun at the cost of something in the mind itself.

I hear the voice of protest: "We do not propose to curb the mind for ever, but only for a short while". Why even for a short while? That does not make sense. The real place of swaraj is within us . . . and the bondage too is always within the mind.¹³

That has a relevance far beyond the charkha controversy of 1921. Freedom to question is essential to growth in understanding.

A few years later, in July 1937, Gandhi himself

placed his plan for "basic national education" before the public of India in a short but pregnant article in *Harijan*. The article, with others that followed it, aroused a storm of controversy, and once more the charkha was at the centre of the storm. There were many who accused Gandhi of wanting to turn the schools into sweat-shops where children would be condemned to mindless and monotonous labour. Nothing could be further from the truth. What he claimed was that "*the highest development of the mind and the soul*" may be attained through the commonest activities of productive manual work, *provided that* these handicrafts are taught "not merely mechanically but scientifically, that is to say, the child should know the why and wherefore of every process". In other words, Gandhi gives a central place in education to the questioning of experience, to the thirst to understand and know *why*. We human beings are "born curious". A rule-of-thumb dexterity may enable us to earn a living; it does *not* satisfy our human need to understand. An English boy of about twelve, who saw a charkha for the first time on a visit to Bombay and was shown how to operate it, turned to me with a sigh of the deepest satisfaction. "I *always* wanted to know", he said, "how the yarn came out of the cotton!" Both manual training, and the so-called academic training may be, and often are, purely mechanical; but both kinds of training, rightly handled, are capable of feeding the human desire to understand, and they only deserve the name of education when they do so.

Tagore's criticism of the programme of "spinning for swaraj" in 1921 was that men tended to carry it out mechanically, in obedience to "authority"—whereas the precondition of freedom is an understanding of what freedom implies.

Joy, like understanding, can be found both in the course of working for a livelihood, and in the freely-chosen pursuits of our leisure. "Joy is in fullness of life", said Tagore. "It is man's nature that he must seek joy, not mere success, in action." What Toynbee calls "disinterested creation" is one of the great sources of joy: "I too will something make, and *joy* in the making", wrote the English poet. Joy is the reward of difficult achievement, whether physical, intellectual or artistic.

Tagore never tired of pointing out that the joy of mastery in any of these fields is only to be had by a willing submission to the nature of one's materials and the natural disciplines of one's art. "The harmony of bondage and freedom is the dance of creation". "Poetry is much more strict (in its laws) than prose, because poetry has the freedom of joy in its origin and end".

Among the keenest joys of my own adolescence were the long English summer Saturdays. Half a dozen of us would take the local train to some tiny village station in a fold of the lonely northern hills. We were equipped with map and compass, stout boots and plenty of plain food. We went exploring, scrambling up water-courses, picking our way across wide solitudes towards some distant rocky crest, exulting in the vast and lovely scene, finding at last a battered, almost illegible signpost and an almost invisible track. Our parents let us go, knowing

that we *could* read a map and use a compass, that we had one another's company and the pennies to pay our fare home. We returned in the evening, aching in every limb, our legs bruised and muddied on the wet rocks, our arms scratched by thorns, and sore with sunburn—but inexpressibly content in our sense of triumphant achievement. Sheer *joy*, won by obedience to the natural disciplines of knowledge and skill which underlay the freedom of the hills.

So often, in home and school alike, children suffer from our misunderstanding both of the meaning of discipline and of the meaning of freedom. How often do we remember that 'discipline' and 'disciple' are closely related words? Any genuine discipleship is a freely-chosen obedience; any genuine discipline is a 'bondage' freely accepted, for the sake of the mastery to which it leads. When we talk about the 'good discipline' of a school, do we really mean that the children are learning the freedom of mastery through obedience to the natural laws of their materials? or do we mean that they are learning to submit to an imposed order which is supposed somehow to be good in itself? Does 'disciplining' a student mean teaching him the inherent laws of learning, or punishing him for breaking the arbitrary laws of authority? When we speak of "giving the child his freedom", do we mean helping him to attain the hard-won freedom of mastery, or leaving him to an easy-going license which can only lead to enslavement and disaster? These questions go to the very root of a fully human education.

Joy in the freedom of mastery means also joy in

excellence. In Tagore's great national poem, the "heaven of freedom" which he desired for India includes "tireless striving stretching out its arms towards perfection". The striving for excellence is a deeply human urge, and our schools do not do enough to encourage it. By expecting and accepting the mediocre they deprive children of a valuable part of their human heritage. School "pass-marks" of 40%, 35%, even 30%, are both ridiculous and pathetic. In skills which are both objectively measurable and educationally significant, these slovenly attitudes are a betrayal of the children. The basic tools of knowledge, such as the "three R's," can never be used as a means to understanding and joy unless the mechanical mastery is so perfect as to be automatic. No child is free to *enjoy* what he reads if he stumbles over the words; no child is free to *enjoy* carpentry if he still hits his thumb with the hammer more often than he hits the nail on the head...and so on. For the sake of his human growth, the child needs to feel confident that there are things he *knows*—one hundred percent!

Along with the joy in achievement, there is the equally distinctive human joy in contemplation—the joy in beauty, the love of things as they are and people as they are, for their own sake. This experience is very simply and beautifully expressed in a song sung by Uva-onuk, an Eskimo "wise woman":

The great sea
Has set me adrift;
It moves me

As the weed in a great river.
Earth and the great weather
Move me,
Have carried me away,
And move my inward parts with joy.¹⁴

Such receptiveness to the beauty of things need not be divorced from the practical need to use them in the course of making a living. For the Eskimo, for example, skill in managing "the great sea" and "the great weather" are essential to his survival, but this does not prevent him from enjoying them for what they are in themselves. In our garish and noisy towns many of our children are starved of the experience of natural beauty; they have no chance to enjoy and be moved by the pageantry of sky and sea. It is however possible, if we are sensitive ourselves, to help them to see and enjoy the beauty of human craftsmanship. There is a deep and simple beauty in things whose form has been perfectly adapted to their function. The perfection of fitness can be found in a simple earthen pitcher; it can also be found in the lovely lines of a plane coming in to land. The pitcher and the plane, each in its own sphere, realise perfection in their essential simplicity:

All man's industrial efforts culminate in the production of a thing whose sole and guiding principle is the ultimate principle of simplicity. . . . Perfection is attained, not when there is no longer anything to add, but when there is no longer anything to take away".¹⁵

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This is as true for scientific understanding and poetic creation as it is for craftsmanship and engineering. The scientist feels a joy which is both intellectual and aesthetic when he can relate apparently diverse phenomena to a single simple law. The poet is satisfied when his poem is stripped down to the essence of his vision. Is it fanciful to see the same creative simplification at work in the field of human conduct, when Jesus reduced "all the Law and the Prophets" to two simple essentials, and demonstrated in his own life that the two are ultimately one?

Thou shalt love the Lord the God . . . this is the first and great commandment. And the second is *like unto it*, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.¹⁶

It is natural that this striving after the simplicity of perfection should lead the world's creative thinkers to practice a like simplicity in the business of daily living. The point is illustrated by an anecdote about Socrates preserved by that old Greek gossip Diogenes Laertius. Socrates, it is said, was strolling through the marketplace, looking at the goods offered for sale. "My, my" he exclaimed, "what a lot of things I don't need!" The tradition of a liberal education, both in India and in the west, has been one of material simplicity, "When the mind is sensitive to the deeper call of reality", wrote Rabindranath Tagore, "it naturally turns away from the fictitious value of things." We have seen in this discussion that "things" have a *real* value, and that

working with things, both in earning a livelihood and in disinterested creation, may enable men to grow in understanding and joy. Where then is the line to be drawn between a true, and a fictitious, evaluation of the material?

Tagore rejected completely the "ascetic" argument that because the world known to our senses is transient, even in some way illusory, it is therefore to be condemned as evil. We are corporeal beings, and for all us the bonds of the material are real, if temporary:

To make renunciation easy by calling the world names is neither true nor brave . . . There is a cheap asceticism which means only an avoidance of responsibility—as if there is something glorious in submitting to dirt, discomfort and disease. To pit the callousness of asceticism against the callousness of luxury is merely fighting one evil with the help of another. But *to be able to love material things, to clothe them with tender grace, and yet not be attached to them*, this is a great service.

Here is the crux of the matter. To love material things is to care for their intrinsic worth, to use them with care and a sense of responsibility. To be attached is to seize them greedily to serve our own desire, and carelessly to destroy. Both asceticism and luxury are callous, and callousness is the antithesis of love. For love, the material and transient is not an obstacle to

the growth of man towards reality; it is a vehicle of that reality.

The rose that here and now
Thy mortal eyes behold
From all eternity
Hath also bloomed in God.¹⁷

What *sir* and caring may mean in a human culture, as contrasted with the callous destruction which a clever and selfish materialism can bring about, can be illustrated from the values of the American Indian peoples, and their reaction to the modern "technocracy" which has overwhelmed them:

One thing we know: all things are connected. All things are connected like the blood that unites one family . . . To sit or lie upon the naked earth is to be able to think more clearly, feel more keenly, see more deeply into the mysteries of life, come closer in kinship with other lives. We know that lack of respect for growing, living things soon leads to lack of respect for humans too . . .

When we hunted bison, we killed only what we needed; we utilised every part of the carcass with a care which was the expression of our respect. We took only dead wood for fuel, out of courtesy for nature. When we use rocks, we take only little ones for our cooking. But when the white men hunted the bison they did not use the carcasses; often they did not take even the hides

or tongues; they killed because they like to do that. They cut down the growing living forest; they blasted the rocks and scattered them. Everywhere the white man has touched the earth, it is sore".¹⁸

India too has cherished the ideals of *ahimsa*, *asthaya*, *asangraha*, but often in too narrow a sense. We have to turn to the so-called "backward" peoples of the world to find cultures which do *not* value "riches", which do *not* "take thought for the morrow", which use the gifts of the earth with reverence, but do not seek to possess it. Such are the Aborigines of Australia; such are some of the ancient food-gathering Adivasi people of our own South Indian hills. "They have no notion of anyone *appropriating* any part of the earth". They are close to the spirit expressed in the ancient hymn:

To the God who resides in fire and water, in
trees and plants,
Immanent in the world and in the universe,
We bow, we bow.

Our present consumer-society, in India and throughout the world, is threatened once more by the Sphinx, the monster which has been generated by its own fear and its own greed. Overshadowing all our petty human squabbles and our equally petty patchwork plans, hang the threat of possible nuclear disaster, and the threat posed by our rape of the earth's resources and our callous pollution of its fragile, life-supporting envelope of air, soil and water. The "educated" public is still only

dimly aware of the danger, and their general reaction is to turn their backs on it, and say complacently that our clever technologists will find some way of dealing with it.

This is not the place for details; they have been supplied in plenty by competent scientists, and the facts are available. What I want to point out here is that it is not man the clever animal, but man the student, poet and seer, who has been able to understand the true nature of our predicament, and who has been able to point to the only effective way out. The time has come when those who jeer at a humane education of the kind we have been discussing, and condemn it as remote from the "realities" of life, should be told in no uncertain terms that it is they, the worshippers of possessions and power, who inhabit a dream world remote from reality. It was an ancient Sanskrit poet who was close enough to reality to write the verse which both characterises and condemns the "nuclear age":

Adharmenaidhate râbat, tato bhadrâni pashyati,
tatah sapatnân jayati—samûlastu vinashyati.

(By unrighteousness men prosper, in it they find their good, through it they defeat their enemies—but they perish at the root). It was Tagore, who quoted this verse in illustration of what he called *The Crisis in Civilisation*, who also foresaw the crisis in our material resources. Thirty years before the publication of *Silent Spring*, the epoch-making book by the poet-scientist Rachel Carson, Tagore had written:

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Mother Earth has enough for the healthy appetites of her children; . . . but she has not nearly enough for the sudden growth of a whole world of spoiled and pampered children who know no limit to their desires.¹⁹

For those whose view of man is limited to the material, the only possible defences against these dangers are themselves based on an appeal to fear and greed—the same animal urges which are at the root of all the trouble. We talk of "security", and of a more "prudent" calculation of our demands upon the patient Earth. We probably think that the poet who wrote that "Prudence, prudence is the deadly sin"²⁰ was talking nonsense—forgetting that "prudence" is after all only a rather unpleasant compound of greed and fear. It ought to be obvious that we shall not get very far by calling in Satan to drive out Satan.

No! We can only save the world from the Sphinx of the twentieth century if we can give a truer answer to her riddle than the "clever animal" view of man. Humanity is "perishing at the root" because it is ignoring and starving its real roots, because it is failing to nourish that "something within that is divine". To offer our children a narrowly utilitarian "vocational education", motivated *only* by the self-regarding urge for "security" of livelihood, will not solve our real problem; alone, it will not even solve the problem of unemployment and poverty. Education, to be worth the name, must offer such a view of the self-transcendent dignity of human nature as will inspire man to

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overcome his greeds and fears and to build a new world of disciplined freedom and creative simplicity. This does not mean that we should ignore "vocational education"; in a fully human life there must be "*both* culture (understanding of and joy in the world for its own sake) *and* expert knowledge of some useful practical skill."²¹ The skills which supply our own and others' needs must be learned, but they will be best learned in a context in which they are seen not only as avenues to livelihood, but also as avenues to service and as expressions of "disinterested creation," of delight in the material world. That context is a culture permeated by faith in the reality and importance of the non-material elements in man.

Nearly a thousand years ago, a master-craftsman in India, inscribed on the lovely astrolabe which he had made, a sentence which commemorates the wholeness of his experience *as craftsman and as man*: "This astrolabe is the work of Hussein Ali, mechanic and mathematician and servant of the Most High God". Professor Jacks, who quotes him, adds a sentence which Hussein Ali would have understood: "The law of good workmanship is as deep as the universe".²² He would also have understood Tagore's desire "to liberate the human soul by linking both work and enjoyment to the Supreme".

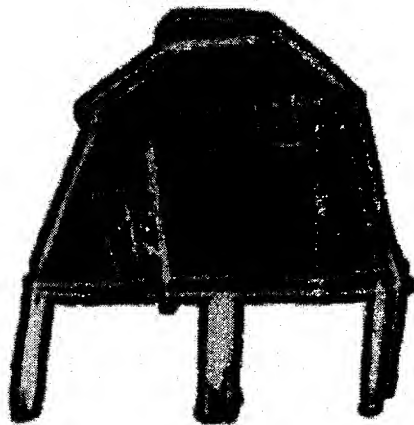
Finally, human education is not complete unless it helps in coming to terms with our own mortality, and with the meaning of the fact that while "our days are as grass", we yet in some way share in a life "higher than the measure of humanity". So that while a callous

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asceticism is rejected, detachment and renunciation are valid. Tagore should have the last word:

The true meaning of living is outliving; life is ever growing out of itself, the ripe seed proves its immortality by its renunciation... Our seers say that the world is an egg; we break out of the shell, so that life may grow in a wider freedom... To prepare during adolescence for the world-life in which the soul is to reach maturity through self-dedication and discipline, and to find at the end of physical existence the world of ineffable light—that is the only way to attain fullness of meaning.²³

The Education of the Citizen



Our focus so far has been on the individual, and on how education may help him to grow into a fully mature human being. Because the human being is a social animal, this whole process is a social process. It is true that "to be a complete man one must learn to live both in isolation and in community". But the isolation even of the greatest men is never absolute. They are rooted like the rest of us in the common earth, and the strength which enables them to stand alone enriches the life of the human community to which they belong.

Today we shall consider the social process of education in its relationship to a special aspect of human community, namely the political organisation of the state. The importance of this has been stressed by Bertrand Russell:

Considered in the light of eternity, the education of the individual is to my mind a finer thing than the education of the citizen; but considered politically, in relation to the needs of the time, the education of the citizen must I fear take first place.²⁴

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The education of the citizen has assumed this importance because of the changes that have taken place in modern times in the nature of the State.

Throughout human history there has been a creative tension between man's need to develop his individual qualities and his need to be part of a community. The most successful human communities are those which have best maintained the delicate balance between individual initiative and social stability. In this balance, the state's function has been to provide public justice and public security, and down to modern times these were usually its only functions. The social, economic and cultural life of human communities was essentially autonomous, and the boundaries of these communities were not necessarily co-terminous with those of the state. One Empire, such as Rome, might hold together politically a number of very diverse social groups; on the other hand peoples whose culture was basically the same might owe political allegiance to a number of different rulers, as happened in Germany and Italy right down to the nineteenth century. India could supply plenty of similar examples.

During the last three centuries, however, there have been significant changes. As a result, many people have come to regard society and state as synonymous, and to assume that all the traditional functions of society should be taken over by the state. Tagore summed up the situation in his essay *Society and State*:

In India the king defended his territory and dispensed justice, but society attended to all else,

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from the supply of water to the supply of knowledge. Today, of our own accord, we are ready to hand over to Government the duties that once belonged to society. Society has lost interest in itself, and Government must provide even the gift of education. That is where the danger lies.

This change has come about partly as a result of the development of the modern idea of a "nation-state". The idea of a *nation* has very ancient roots; it goes back to tribal society, to a feeling of belonging together with others who inhabit the same area, follow the same customs and speak the same language. But the idea that a nation should *also* be a state, that because it is a nation it has an inherent right to political sovereignty—this is modern; it is one of the main elements in the identification of state with society.

The French and American revolutions were inspired by the great movement for "liberty, equality, fraternity" which led to the abolition of slavery over much of the world, and to a new awareness of the claims to human dignity of submerged and oppressed groups. The old idea that citizens should have a share in the decisions about how their country is governed was coupled with the idea that the citizens' government should be active in promoting the citizens' welfare. So arose the idea of the "welfare state".

Further, the industrial and technological revolution has resulted in an increasingly complex economic organisation and increasing state control of economic life. "If is no longer the interests of a few merchants that are

at stake; with industrialisation everyone's livelihood depends on the preservation of the national economy".²⁵ Economic nationalism reinforces political nationalism, while mass production and mass communication result in the decay of the local community in which the individual once played his part; he has no control, in this "Welfare State", over the decisions which affect his welfare.

Education for citizenship in such conditions must raise basic questions about the nature and functions of the state. "What is a State?" was one of the questions which Socrates discussed with the citizens of Athens. The Athenians' attitude to their state and their ideas about citizenship are reflected in a speech by their great statesman Pericles, as reported by the historian Thucydides:

We are a free democracy, but we are obedient. We obey the laws, more especially those that protect the oppressed, and the unwritten laws whose transgression brings acknowledged shame. We do not allow absorption in our own affairs to interfere with participation in the city's... yet we yield to none in independence of spirit and complete self-reliance.

The Athenians felt strongly about the duty of *participation* in public affairs; the word *idiot*, which basically means "private", was used by them to describe a man who carried his privacy to extremes and evaded

his public responsibilities. They regarded the state as a necessary tool of the good life, and they laid stress on the *ethical* requirements of the law. Their attitude could be expressed by a paraphrase of Jesus' comment on a religious law of his own nation: "The state was made for man, not man for the state".

The philosopher Aristotle lived at a later time, when Athenian democracy had been undermined by corruption and war; he was the tutor of one who was to make himself an Emperor, Alexander of Macedon. Aristotle's conception of the relationship of the individual citizen to the state is very different from that of Pericles:

We must not suppose that any one of the citizens belongs to himself, for they all belong to the state and are each a part of the state.²⁶

In other words, the state is not the tool of society, men are the tools of the state. This is the germ of the totalitarian idea; the state is regarded as an organism in its own right, and individual human beings are merely cells in the "body politic", who may be sacrificed without scruple to "the good of the state"—just as a surgeon may sacrifice some part of the human body to preserve the life of the whole.

In Aristotle's time this idea of the primacy of the State was exemplified by Athens' great rival, Sparta, whose citizens were regarded as belonging to the State. It is no accident that the two cities also differed widely in their educational practice. Aristotle praised the customs

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of Sparta, where "they make education the business of the State". In Athens, the content of education as such was no concern of the state, and individual masters had complete freedom in what and how they taught their students. After the young men had finished their education, however, they were required by the state to learn the laws and to undergo military training. In other words, the state interfered only to ensure its own special interests, justice and defence.

Looking back on the two ancient cities from this distance in time we cannot avoid seeing that the free education of Athens produced a galaxy of creative spirits whose achievements in art and literature, philosophy and science, are among the great treasures of mankind. One could say the same of the free education of ancient India. By contrast, the state-controlled education of Sparta was intellectually and spiritually sterile. Yet in our own times, for the reasons we have discussed, there is an almost universal assumption that the state *ought* to take direct responsibility for the education of its people. All who are concerned with education for citizenship must ask themselves whether this is a desirable trend.

The greatest men of modern India have made their position clear. "I look upon any increase in the power of the state with the greatest fear", wrote Mahatma Gandhi. "It does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress".

Tagore's Letters from Russia, describing his observations there in 1932, say the same thing: "Society

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can never be made strong by weakening the individual". Twenty-five years earlier, at the time of the swadeshi movement of 1905-08, he had pleaded that society, as distinct from the state, should recover responsibility for its own life:

We must win over our country from our own inertia. Boons from the Government only make our inertia more intense, with the effect that our country is lost to us. For *a man's real homeland is whatever country he helps to create*, by his own wisdom and skill, his devotion and action...

Our aim must be to restore to the villagers the power to meet their own requirements... their own schools, workshops and granaries, their cooperative stores and banks, their meeting places for work and play, where the appointed headman may hear and settle local disputes.

This plea for "building from below" by means of a plurality of centres of local responsibility, instead of waiting passively for benefits to descend from above, was the central theme of the socio-political philosophy of Gandhi and is the basis of the idea of "sarvodaya".

Vinoba Bhave has laid special stress on the need for education to be free from state control:

Throughout the world today, the direction of education is in the hands of Governments, the teaching given in the schools is controlled by

Government. I consider that this is extremely dangerous. The result is that there is no public opinion—that is to say, no independent public opinion... Freedom of thought existed in India formerly, because there was freedom of education. Thought must be broad and unfettered, power must be kept within bounds.²⁷

Vinoba is asking, in an Indian context, the same question which John Dewey asked in America in his book *Democracy and Education*:

Is it possible for an educational system to be conducted by a national state and yet the full social ends of the educational process not be restricted, constrained and corrupted?

Well, *is* it possible? It is important that teachers should face this question for themselves. We cannot answer it without at the same time considering another question: What *are* “the full social ends of the educational process”? What is the *aim* of education for citizenship?

T. P. Nunn answers this question by referring, as Gandhi and Tagore did in the passages we have just quoted, to the social value of individual freedom and initiative:

Nothing good enters the human world except through the free activities of individual men and women. Education must strengthen men’s sense of the worth of individuality—not as a private

possession but as the only means by which real value can enter the world... Through its schools, an organ of its life, a nation should constantly submit itself to self-criticism.²⁸

Such self-criticism need not always be negative; the real meaning of the verb *criticise* is “judge” or “evaluate”. Education should enable young citizens to evaluate all the features of the nation’s life in the light of the nation’s values and standards, and so to create the independent public opinion of which Vinoba spoke.

This, it seems to me, is the crux of education for citizenship. Just as there can be no complete education of the individual which ignores the self-transcendent values which make a human being, so also there can be no complete education of the citizen which ignores the cultural values upon which human society is built. In the last chapter we argued that a conception of man in his wholeness must underlie even the “practical” education which provides for his material needs. In the same way a conception of the full meaning of human community must guide us even in planning the “practical” education of the citizen. It is not enough that he should “learn the laws”, from the rules of the road upwards; he must also learn to see his political obligations to the state in the light of his larger obligations to his national society and to humanity as a whole.

This perceptive is of immediate relevance to our situation in India. On November 26, 1949, we enshrined

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our national values and cultural goals in the noble preamble to our Constitution:

WE THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved . . . to secure to all
JUSTICE, social, economic and political
LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship
EQUALITY of status and opportunity
FRATERNITY; assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation
In our Constituent Assembly do hereby adopt . . . this Constitution.

On this basis we describe our national values as democracy, socialism and secularism. Education for citizenship in India should be concerned with the clarification of our thinking and the strengthening of our practice, with regard to these ideals.

Let us begin with "democracy". Both those who advocate, and those who denigrate democracy often do so on the assumption that democracy is to be identified with *one* of its political forms, namely a representative system of parliamentary government in which "one man, one vote" decides the issue, and the will of the majority is carried out. Consider in contrast the following statement by an American Negro writer:

Intrinsic to the democratic idea is the concept of individual worth and dignity, the acceptance of differences as valid, valuable and human; and the

unifying force of a common belief in the transcendent value of personal freedom . . . Yet we have placed an increasingly high premium not upon individuality but upon conformity. With the rapid maturing of the industrial age went a decline of individualism and a substitution of class identity and values. Freedom of thought and action has been curtailed . . . materialism, the cult of prosperity, and a growing nationalism have dominated American thought. (Along with) the abolition of slavery (came) the birth of new social forces *fundamentally as contradictory as slavery to the democratic idea*.²⁹

India needs to reflect on the meaning of democracy as much as America does, for here too there are "social forces contradictory to the democratic idea". It would be interesting to use the above quotation as the starting-point of a seminar for teachers on citizenship. The questions for discussion might include the following:

Do you accept the three criteria of democracy listed by the Negro writer? If not, what is *your* definition of democracy?

Do you accept those three criteria as the proper aims of a good human society, whether you call them democracy or not? Why? or why not?

How far do the values of "the industrial age" (conformity, class consciousness, materialism, nationalism) dominate modern Indian life and educational thought?

To what extent has the political machinery of "one man one vote" strengthened group and class conformities expressed in caste, communal and linguistic struggles for privilege and power? Would some alternative political structure and machinery express the basic democratic ideal better than our present one?

Would you agree that the principle that differences are valid and valuable means that one test of a democratic society is its treatment of its minorities? A Japanese social scientist recently reported to an Asian seminar that in Japan "the tendency to seek uniformity and a homogenous society limits democracy and alienates the nation from others".³⁰

Can the democratic idea described in the passage quoted, with its emphasis on the intrinsic worth of the individual, be maintained without nurture of the non-material aspects of humanity?

AND, how far does the practice of our school and college communities, in their actual patterns of decision-making and the way in which they manage their own affairs, reflect the values of a democratic society? If we were to find (as we certainly *should* find in many cases) that the structure of the school is essentially hierarchical and authoritarian, what steps could be taken by the teacher-student community to change it, so that the experience of school/college life becomes a real training ground for democracy?

These are questions, not answers. An adequate answer to most of them would need a book in itself. The purpose of this essay is not to supply answers, but to indicate the nature of the *questions* involved in an education for citizenship. They are questions of value, of our philosophy of life.

The second of our trio of accepted national ideals is socialism. This word needs to be studied with the same objective coolness as the word democracy. If democracy is rooted in the worth of the individual expressed in his claim to liberty, socialism, we might say, is rooted in the worth of the individual expressed in his claim to justice, and particularly to an equitable chance of access to the means of making a living. Socialism aims at making the natural resources and tools of production available to the whole social group, and so giving each person the opportunity to earn a livelihood by his labour.

When Vinoba Bhave argues that in an equitable society "the needs of the body should be supplied by the labour of the body", and that no able-bodied man or woman should be exempted, by virtue of supposed "status", from taking a fair share of the bodily labour and danger of the work which supplies the material needs of society, he is stating a basic socialist principle: From each according to his ability, to each according to his need. Every human being has the duty, and should be given the opportunity, to contribute towards the material welfare of the group; every human being

has a right to an equitable share of the common wealth. The New Testament parable of "the labourers in the vineyard",³¹ as Gandhi pointed out, embodies this principle, both in its implied criticism of the system which allowed men to stand idle all day in the market-place because "no man had hired them", and in its upholding of the justice of paying "every man a penny" according to his needs, even though some, through no fault of their own, did less work than others.

Socialism is in fundamental contradiction to the entrenched idea that physical labour is somehow below the dignity of an "educated" man, who should not be expected to sweep his own office or even to carry his own files. One only has to spell this out to realise that real socialism would mean some far-reaching changes in the daily habits of a great many people, and in the values inculcated, consciously or unconsciously, by a great many schools.

The socialist ideal should make the educated citizen ask questions about our present Government-controlled system of education. The following evaluation refers to prevalent conditions throughout the so-called "third world", including India:

Educational systems serve the social, political and economic power-structure upon which they depend. "Free" public education does not provide real equality of access, but reinforces social stratification . . . Socio-economic origin determines success in school, where the student imbibes the attitudes, habits and social values of the elites.³²

It is by no means clear that the control of the means of production by a "socialist" monolithic state rather than by "private" corporations *necessarily* secures economic justice for the individual. What *is* clear is that an educational system controlled and directed by *any* power-elite is not likely to encourage the objective analysis which good citizenship demands.

The socialist ideal needs clarifying in another way. Its goal is "a classless society" in which people are valued for themselves and not for their origins. But a classless society must not be confused with a uniform mediocrity which ignores the variety of human talent. In the historical working out of the socialist idea there has been a tendency to glorify "the proletariat" and denigrate "the bourgeois" and "the aristocracy" *as such*, as a class, with no recognition of individual differences. Confucius is reported to be unpopular in China today, probably because he is credited with the saying: "Those who labour with the mind rule, those who labour with the muscles are ruled". Confucius may be criticised, along with the culture to which he belonged, for assuming that brain workers and muscle workers are mutually exclusive categories, and that the former is intrinsically superior. Nevertheless in any human community, even the most egalitarian, the real leaders, who influence decision and action, are those who "labour with the mind", who *reflect* upon experience. Tribal cultures in India are egalitarian; many village elders are illiterate, and daily they "labour with their muscles". Nevertheless, they *rule*, by virtue of the

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dignity, shrewdness and wisdom which are the fruit of "labouring with the mind" upon matters of concern to their community.

The commonly-used phrase "democratic socialism" makes sense to me if it describes a national ideal in which there is a socialist equality, where all have a duty and an opportunity to share in the labour and fruits of material production; in which there is also a democratic respect for individuals and a recognition of the value to society of their varied gifts. Some people do have a larger share than others of the qualities that make a good ruler, just as some have the qualities that make a musician, or gardener, or architect, or doctor. Our human communities have need of all these services and many more; a good society is one that enables and encourages all its members to give of their individual best.

Does it sound very shocking to suggest that democratic socialism needs to provide itself with an aristocracy? Why has "aristocrat" become a "dirty word"? *Aristos* in Greek simply means "best"; an aristocracy is a government by those best fitted to rule. This fitness has nothing to do with wealth or birth. In a socialist, democratic society that man is best fitted to rule who unites understanding of people and skill in human relationships with a clear commitment to the values of socialism and democracy and a realistic assessment of the practical steps needed to bring those goals nearer. H. L. Menchen, discussing the ease with which democratic and socialist ideals may in practice be prostituted to unworthy ends, describes our need as

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"a civilised aristocracy, animated by an intelligent curiosity, sceptical of all facile generalisations, delighting in the 'battle of ideas for its own sake'".

This is something very close to what Vinoba had in mind when he said to the students of Kurnool:

The first and most urgent need is freedom. I want to warn you students that people are trying to force you all into one mould, and therefore you must be alert to preserve your freedom of mind and independence of thought. You should be lions, not sheep. You should say, "My privilege as a student is to be completely free. Certainly I shall think about politics. I shall be open to ideas, but I will not bind myself to any group or party".³³

In Vinoba's view, only such freedom in education can nourish the "civilised aristocracy" and the independent public opinion by which freedom and justice in society may be assured.

Thirdly, India's political ideal includes "secularism". The leaders of our national independence movement were clear as to what they meant by this: that the framework of law and of political government should be based upon principles applicable to all human beings alike, not on any sectional religious law. No thoughtful person is likely to question this principle of the equality of all before the law. But when the secular ideal is worked out in practice there are things that require our continued vigilance. State-controlled education, we say,

must be “secular”; it must deal with the demands of *this* world, not with the claims of any reality beyond it. The overall result is that our public education has a strongly materialist bent and that non-material values end to be ignored. This is an unhealthy situation, for the democratic socialism which we accept is founded on the intrinsic worth and dignity of the human being, and this in its turn stems, as we have seen, from the self-transcendent elements in human nature. How is “secular” education to nurture our self-transcendence, our true humanity? Can it be done under Government authority? The current interest in “moral and spiritual values in education” shows how real the question is.

“Secular” ideals are relevant here in a way which is rarely considered. “Secular” is an adjective formed from the Latin noun *saecula*, which means a generation, or an “age” in the sense in which we may speak of “the age of Ashoka”. A “secular” polity then is not merely one which deals with the world of time as opposed to the world of eternity; it is also one which deals with *this* age, *this* generation, as opposed to one which is fixed for ever. A secular society ought to be dynamic; its political structure ought to be susceptible to change in order that it may continue to serve democratic socialist values in changing circumstances.

This raises one of the recurrent problems of human society, that of the inertia of power, the vested interest of the ruler in the *status quo ante*. How often have the revolutionaries of yesterday become the reactionaries of today—in education as well as in politics. The philosopher A. N. Whitehead warned us

against this danger:

Every intellectual revolution which has ever stirred humanity into greatness has been a passionate protest against inert ideas. Then alas it has proceeded *by some educational scheme* to bind humanity with inert ideas of its own fashioning.³⁴

If society is to be saved from “inert ideas” and remain open to “the winds of change” the education of its citizens must not be imprisoned in any official “scheme”, but retain its autonomy as an agent, not of the state but of society. “The obligation of a teacher is to serve *society*, not to protect the existing *state* from change”.³⁵

It is doubly difficult, however, for those who are financially dependent on the state to evaluate disinterestedly the need for these changes. There are not many teachers who have the courage to write to their employers, the Government departments of education, what Vittorino wrote to Gonzago Duke of Mantua when he accepted the invitation to organise a school:

I accept the post on the understanding that you require of me nothing which shall be in any way unworthy of either of us, and I will continue to serve you so long as your own life shall command my respect.

One of the most magnificent examples in our century of teachers who decided that their duty to society as

citizens must take precedence of their obedience to the state as their employer, was seen during the Nazi occupation of Norway during the second World War. Norwegian teachers refused *en masse*, on conscientious grounds, to carry out the instructions of the pro-Nazi Quisling government with regard to the programme and teaching of the schools. The teachers won the struggle, because they stood together, because they were ready to risk imprisonment and death, and because while the physical power of the state was against them, the moral power of society was wholly with them. In Norway in 1941 there was no doubt that society and state were *not* synonymous terms; there was no doubt in the teachers' minds that their primary duty was to society.

A few years ago in India, the Government announced its plan for uniform "official" textbooks for basic school subjects throughout each State. Many teachers, in the public press and elsewhere, argued strongly against this proposal on sound educational grounds. Their arguments were valid, and their fears have been justified by experience. For as we all know, their protests were disregarded and the official textbooks were made compulsory. The teachers shrugged their shoulders and accepted the decision. They are so accustomed to state control that they feel powerless to do anything but acquiesce, even against their own better judgement. Yet it is obvious that the state would be powerless to run the schools against the united conscientious opposition of the teaching profession. Do we not need, as Tagore warned us long ago, to win back our country, and our schools, from our own inertia?

The great French writer Albert Camus expressed his conviction of the duty of the citizen to his nation in a *Letter to a German Friend* which queried the common German attitude of unquestioning obedience to the state:

This is what separated us from you. You were satisfied to serve the power of your nation, and we dreamed of giving ours her truth.

"To give our nation her truth"—that is a noble description of the duty of a citizen. But it is not likely to be a very popular one, especially with the "establishment" (political or other) to whom enquiry into truth and the possibility of change represent a potential threat. Apart from the establishment, there are always many in any society who are content to conform to the familiar pattern, who do not want to be disturbed. Socrates, the truth-seeker was accused of "rejecting the Gods of the state" when he appealed from old habits of thought to the reason and conscience of the individual. Independent creative thinking is apt to arouse hostility: this is what the poet Blake meant when he said, referring to the heroic figure of the rebel Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*: "The true poet is always of the devil's party".

As the agents of society's self-criticism, the schools have a duty to say, in face of the inertia of power and of apathy, "the time has come for change". They have a duty to claim, for themselves and others, the right of dissent from the immediate policies of the state, and the right of public debate on controversial issues. Real

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advance in knowledge in any field, scientific or sociological, depends upon untrammelled thought and free discussion. No one was more strongly convinced of the necessity, in a free democracy, of this right to dissent and to debate than Thomas Jefferson, the architect of the US Constitution. "A nation's freedom", he wrote, "depends upon the freedom of its press, which cannot be limited without being lost . . . To demand that the censors (i.e. the critics) of public measures be given up for punishment is to renew the demand of the wolves in the fable that the sheep should give up their dogs as hostages of the peace". No one suffered more than Jefferson from ill-natured public criticism, and no one defended more steadily the right of the critics to criticise. One of the greatest contributions of an effective education for citizenship should be to provide society with a set of fearless and vocal watch-dogs.

One of the finest statements I know of the principles we have been discussing was made by Senator J. W. Fulbright:

In a democracy, dissent is an act of faith. Criticism is more than a right, it is a responsibility. To criticise one's country is to do it a service and to pay it a compliment.

No one challenges the value of national consensus, but "consensus" can be understood in two ways. If it is interpreted to mean unquestioning support of existing policies, its effects can only be pernicious and undemocratic, serving to suppress differences rather than to reconcile them.

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If on the other hand consensus is understood to mean a general agreement on goals and values, but not necessarily on the best means of reaching them, then and then only does it become a lasting basis of national strength.

Jefferson put the point more vividly:

A little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical. It is a medicine necessary for the sound health of Government. . . . What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that its people preserve the spirit of resistance?

Or, as Gandhi reminded us in different words, true *swaraj* depends on the people's ability, not to usurp authority, but to resist authority when it is abused.

When we reach this point it is clear that the education of the citizen to which Bertrand Russell gave first priority cannot really be divorced from the education of the individual. The place accorded in our personal scale of values to material wealth and power, as compared with "knowledge, love and service", determines in a very real way our actions and attitudes as citizens. Thucydides, the great Greek historian who recorded the downfall of Athens in the Peloponnesian War confessed sadly and truly that the real strength of the city had been sapped by "the desire for power which greed and ambition inspire".³⁶ The fall of the Athenian democracy is a tragic

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illustration of the truth of the remark made by Robert Louis Stevenson so many centuries later: The price we pay for money is paid in liberty".

Bertrand Russell himself, side by side with his insistence on the importance of the education of the citizen, also insisted that this is not the whole of education. "No man is fit to educate", he wrote, "unless he feels each pupil to be an end in himself, with his own rights and personality—not merely a soldier or a citizen". Tagore has put the same point in his own imaginative language, and expanded it:

A man is a part of the stream of generations, enriching its flow; he is also an individual with a beginning and an end, and needs to reach completion within those limits. He is degraded by being looked upon *merely* as the protector of his country or the producer of its wealth. India has looked on man as greater than any purpose he could serve.³⁷

Here is the counterpart, in the relationship of the individual to the community, of that principle of intrinsic value which we discussed in the last lecture. A fully mature human being, we said, is one who looks upon the world as "greater than any (utilitarian) purpose it could serve"; we found the distinctive mark of our humanity in our desire to understand and to enjoy things-in-themselves, for their own sake. We may now go on to say, as a result of our present discussion, that the mark of a fully mature human community is that it looks upon

the men and women of its own (and other) societies *not* primarily as tools who may be used to serve the material interests of the state, but as ends in themselves, to be respected and valued for their own sake. The institutions of such a society are made for man; the goal of its common life is the enrichment of the individuality of its members, not its own material wealth or power.

We teachers must therefore claim our freedom from the compulsions of state power in order to serve the compulsions of love, to nurture and strengthen this human community. Radical social thinkers in many countries see the best hope of mankind in the growth from the grass roots of face-to-face communities of men and women committed to justice and freedom, and able in their united strength to resist the pressures of power. Growth of this kind calls for a many-sided creative endeavour, and in this task of citizenship the teacher has an essential part to play. In Vinoba's words he must be the *gatuwit*, the path-finder, who is qualified by his objective and dispassionate study of public affairs to act as guide to the mind and heart of the nation,³⁸ or, as Camus phrased it, to give the nation her truth. And the teacher can only fulfil this role when he refuses either to carry out blindly the mandates of the state, or to withdraw into some comfortable academic seclusion. Instead, he must "pursue the world-life with wisdom".³⁹ For myself I find the essence of good citizenship in the words of that great champion of the robbed and exploited Australian Aborigines, Dr. H. C. Coombs: "Withdrawal is not for me. I remain unwilling to leave the field of decision to those who profit and those who conform".⁴⁰

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38. Vinoba Bhave, *The Third Power*
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40. Quoted in Stewart Harris, *This our Land*

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